

By defining the standards of excellence in teaching, the National Board helps to focus and upgrade teacher training, recognize outstanding teachers, keep our best teachers in the classroom, and help them help other teachers. National Board certification helps our teachers test themselves against the toughest standards. I believe it would be a terrible mistake to end national support for the work of the board, and I'm going to work with Congress to make sure that this provision never reaches my desk.

Every school in America ought to have at least one board-certified teacher who can inspire and help all his or her colleagues. Now is no time to walk away from our commitment to public education or to reject our common obligation to help our children and to help you help our children. It's no time for Congress to set a poor example for students by ignoring the evidence, the lessons that are plainly there from all the educational research that has been done in the last 15 years, since the issuance of the "Nation at Risk" report; from all the anecdotal evidence they could pick up by talking to any one of you who have been honored by your fellow teachers and your States.

This should not be a partisan issue; it should not be an ideological issue. It ought to be, purely and simply, what can we do to help you

do what is best for our children and their future?

The most encouraging thing I can say about looking at all of you is, while we go on and debate all this, you're going back to your classes, back to our kids, and because of you they're going to do just fine while we argue about, often, the wrong things. [Laughter] And I think that should be deeply encouraging to the American people.

Now, I close with these words, so that we can give our honoree the last word. The great Daniel Webster once said, "If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust. But if we work upon immortal minds, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten to all eternity."

Thank you, Philip Bigler, for brightening those minds to all eternity.

[At this point, Mr. Bigler made brief remarks.]

The President. I think we're supposed to say, class dismissed. Thank you. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:22 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Beth Blegen, 1996 National Teacher of the Year.

Message on the Observance of Armenian Remembrance Day, 1998 April 24, 1998

This year, as in the past, we join with Armenian-Americans throughout the nation in commemorating one of the saddest chapters in the history of this century, the deportations and massacres of a million and a half Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the years 1915–1923.

This painful event from the past also serves as a powerful lesson for the future: that man's inhumanity to man must not be tolerated, and that evil cannot conquer. The Armenian people have endured, surviving the ravages of two World Wars and seven decades of Soviet rule. Throughout the world, and especially in this country, Armenians have contributed to the material, intellectual and spiritual lives of their adopted homes. Today's Armenians are building

a free and independent nation that stands as a living tribute to all those who died.

The United States will continue working to preserve a free Armenia in a peaceful, stable and prosperous Caucasus region. In that spirit, I extend to all Armenians my best wishes on Remembrance Day in the fervent hope that those who died will never be forgotten.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.